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AUTHOR Back, Par-Erik; Lane, Jan-Erik
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ABSTRACT

To analyze organizational development of Swedish universities and colleges, decision theory and implementation theory were examined. Attention was directed to the following models of decision-making: the demographic model, the incremental model, the garbage-can model, and the political model. The focus was on system decision-making, and empirical inquiry sought to discover the extent of rationality and marginalism that was typical of the decision-making. A distinction between two ways of approaching implementation phenomena was made: implementation as the enactment of policy and implementation as the evaluation of policy. The empirical analysis focused on the extent to which goals were reached. The results seem to indicate that essential aspects of higher education institutions may be changed by public policy. It is concluded that there are aspects of higher education where reform is possible and desirable as a response to a changing environment. Data analysis also indicate, however, that there are some aspects of higher education where reforms are neither feasible nor desirable. The continuous process of public policy directed toward organizational development results in bureaucratization. Theoretical implications of the findings are also addressed. (SW)

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CONCLUDED PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: THE UNIVERSITY AS AN ORGANISATION: SYSTEM AND ENVIRONMENT

CONDUCTED AT: Department of Political Science
University of Umeå
S-901 87 UMEÅ, Sweden

SCIENTIFIC LEADER: Professor Pär-Erik Back

PROJECT LEADER: Associate Professor Jan-Erik Lane

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

During the post-war period the Swedish system of higher education has been transformed more extensively than ever before (Svensson, 1978). Two basic factors were conducive to a farreaching organizational development of the institutions of higher education which implied an emphasis on *system characteristics* (Clark, 1983). On the one hand demographic changes created a real need for institutional adaptation and response to a demand explosion during the sixties when the number of students enrolled doubled several times over, on the other hand the transformation was directed through the emergence of a higher education policy expressed in a continuous policy-making process, the outputs from which were put into force by some explicit implementation strategy. How are we to interpret this process of organizational development, governed as it is from the

National Board of Universities and Colleges
P.O. Box 45501
S-104 30 Stockholm SWEDEN
PHONE
+ 46 8 24 85 60

center by means of public policy, in order to understand its logic? The aim of this project, which forms part of the *Research on Higher Education Program*, has been to take a broader look at the organizational development of Swedish universities and colleges by focussing upon processes of public decision-making and of implementation and its outcomes. Maybe the extensive Swedish higher education policy was decided upon by means of "garbage can" processes which - so we are told - are spreading in the public sector (March & Olsen, 1976). Perhaps the Swedish higher education policy is a case of policy failure and testifies to the prevailing conception that it is impossible for public policy and public administration to accomplish their ends by the employment of their means (Wildavsky, 1979; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1983). Or maybe the policy did not result in ineffective implementation but entailed basically an undesirable reform because transformation could have been accomplished by the use of exchange and local adaptation instead of authoritative decesion-making from the center. Typical of the transformation was the emphasis upon public administration working consistently over a long period of time. Perhaps the process was an incremental one, as decision theorists used to conceive of public policy and implementation (Lindblom, 1965; Wildavsky, 1975). In the publications from the project theoretical exercises have been combined with extensive empirical description; the overall developments in public policy as well as in implementation were analyzed and special studies of separate pieces in the organizational transformation were conducted in order to complement the system perspective. Thus, one kind of analysis looked at general findings about the formulation and implementation of the higher education policy whereas another type of study scrutinized single aspects like the creation of a University of Norrland and the transformation of the autonomy of the local institutions.

THEORY AND DATA

Public policy concerning higher education may vary in terms of scope. It is perhaps no exaggeration to claim that the Swedish higher education policy that emerged after the Second World War was typically far-reaching in its range and its systematic nature; a number of different aspects of higher education - its organization as well as its internal life - have become the target for inquiries and decision-making at the central level: the quantitative development, the devision of units, coordination, the distribution of autonomy and influence in a hierarchically structured system of higher education, the principles of internal institutional governance, admission procedures, the curricula of various study programs, the occupational structure. How are we to employ theory and data in order to make sense of this type of higher education policy-making and implementation? It is no accident that the policy, due to its comprehensive scope and systematic orientation, touched upon those aspects of higher education listed above; in a system of higher education where the local institutions possess a low degree of autonomy vis-a-vis the state, adaptation to a changing environment has to be achieved by means of reforms from above of the basic organizational features of universities and colleges. How are we to interpret the huge amount of data pertaining to the making and execution of policy with regard to higher education?

In order the handle the massive amount of information about the organizational development of Swedish universities and colleges decision theory and implementation theory were examined. Models of public decision-making and organizational choice as well as of implementation processes were to guide the collection and interpretation of data; and the data were to be employed to make model choices inquiring into the extent to which data satisfy various implications of the models. Th

reciprocity between theory and data was explicitly acknowledged, meaning that neither of these two basic epistemic elements would dominate the other. The popular idea that theory governs data was rejected as it implies that the empirical argument testing the goodness of fit of various models becomes a huge circular argument in which the data which the theory implies is used to confirm the said theory (Lane & Stenlund, 1983). In the interaction between data and theory there is enough openness to allow for the independent test of models by means of data, which is not to imply that data have been selected randomly. Firstly, the plausibility of different models of decision-making and organizational choice were discussed tentatively in relation to the basic features of the Swedish higher education policy; basic models were scrutinized: rational choice, incrementalism, the demographic approach, the garbage can model and the political model. It has been argued that each and every model of decision-making did not enter into the overview, but for purposes of systematic model evaluation it was not considered necessary to cover everything. A priori it was deemed appropriate to approach the higher education system recognizing the hierarchical nature of the structure.

Thus the focus was placed upon system decision-making and it was left to the empirical inquiry to discover the extent of rationality and marginalism that was typical of the decision-making. The extent to which the demographic model, the incremental model, the garbage can model and the political model satisfy the data was to be decided a posteriori, i.e. by means of empirical evidence. The strict applicability of a rational decision model could be refuted from the outset, but any description of the more detailed properties of the goal function and the technology function of the higher education policy had to be derived from minute analyses of the data. The same procedure was applied to the use and evaluation of theories of implementation. A distinction between two fundamentally different ways of approaching implementation phenomena was introduced: imple-

mentation as the enactment of policy and implementation as the evaluation of policy. The empirical analysis was to focus upon the concept of successful implementation, i.e. the extent to which goals found their outcomes and means were turned into effective programs. This meant the choice of an evaluation perspective dealing with the relations between intentions - means and ends on the one hand - and programs and outcomes on the other. It was emphasised that the analysis of the extent of goal accomplishment must look at unintended outcomes as well as at the magnitude and direction of relationships.

FINDINGS

Maybe the most conspicuous finding in the set of empirical observations about the outcomes was that the implementation assessment has to reconcile intended eufunctional outcomes with an unintended, severely dysfunctional one - the coming of a process of bureaucratization. The basic concepts may be rendered in a 2X2 Table.

	Intended	Unintended
Eufunctional	I	II
Dysfunctional	III	IV

Not only were the bureaucratization phenomena not intended, but they were also unrecognized by the central planners and decision-makers until a government commission, appointed to check whether the allegation about bureaucratization was correct, had to admit that the empirical evidence supported the bureaucratization theme. In the opinion of the Swedish higher education profession the outcome was dysfunctional (Lane and Stenlund, forthcoming). The process of bureaucratization crops up at the central and regional level and at the local level. During the later half of the seventies the increase in various types of administrative personnel

appears to have been so drastic that all administrative economies of scale were wiped out; it seems to be the case that the Swedish state system of higher education is characterized by the absence of the phenomenen of the decreasing relative size of local institutional administrations that is so typical of the American higher education system (Blau, 1974).

However, the findings also show that the Swedish higher education policy did not result in a fundamental policy failure or implementation problem. Looking carefully at the various major decisions complemented by a number of continuous minor decisons as well as the implementation evidence minutely collected in the large NBUC reform follow-up, it appears that most means were implemented into programs and that some goals did in fact find their outcomes. This is not to imply that everything went well - following a naively optimistic view about the capacity of the center to successfully induce change at the local level by means of public decision-making and implementation. The point is much less grandiose, but also more precise: in the implementation evaluation of the reform we cannot find corroboration of the policy failure theme - that public policy is bound to fail because each and every goal will miss its corresponding outcome or - even worse - result in dysfunctional outcomes unrelated to the policy intention. Is higher education reform feasible - is it desirable? Instead of general sweeping judgements about policy failure we need to look at the various aspects of the policy, assessing carefully the evidence in relation to the possible types.

	Desirable	Undesirable
Feasible	I	II
Unfeasible	III	IV

The higher education policy proved feasible as long as it did not challenge fundamental academic models of ope-

ration. The attempt to replace the traditional structure of decision-making within the local institutions failed as did the effort to do away with a liberal arts type of training, because these two characteristics of the higher education system cannot be abolished without removing what is typical of the concept of a university. Other policies which were not fundamentally at odds with basic academic methods of operation fared much better. Were they desirable? That is difficult to determine, but if the assessment of the process of bureaucratization is added to the evaluation of often positive implementation of the means and ends of the policy, then it is matter of taste; so adaptation of the higher education system by means of public policy: feasible - yes, desirable - maybe not.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of a substantial amount of empirical information about sections of the higher education policy divided into major and minor decisions may be employed for the systematic evaluation of prevailing models of public policy-making and organizational choice. The first step in the model evaluation focussing upon the extent to which the data satisfy various models is to allow for the possibility that the various parts of the decision-making process may satisfy more than one model, meaning that we face the task of specifying when and under what circumstances different models may be applicable; thus, we may wish to use the various models in order to separate between system policy-making and institutional decision-making as well as between processes characterized by considerable elements of rational decision model criteria and garbage can decision processes. The second move in the model evaluation is to arrive at a model that portrays the main features of the higher education policy. It is argued that the predominant decision model is not close to prevailing models of public choice. There is hardly any strong corroboration of a garbage can model,

if the focus is upon public policy-making at the system level governing the organizational development of the higher education institutions. It could be argued that we should find extensive garbage can processes within the local institutions in so far as it is a matter of organizational behaviour, but the data admit of another possible interpretation. Most interestingly, the applicability of an incremental decision model is confined to the minor policies, whilst the occurrence of the major decisions indicate the validity of a new model, the public administration model. Insofar as it is a matter of organizational development on a grand scale we have to recognize the possibility that bounded rationality could go together with comprehensiveness.

		Policy Target	
		Marginalism	Comprehensiveness
Goal and Technology Function	Complete rationality	I	II
	Bounded rationality	III	IV

The typical occurence of type IV in the context of Swedish higher education meant that implementation processes became of crucial importance. The evaluation of models of implementation did not support the notion that implementation is simply evaluation, that the goals are never attained but simply reinvented by a reinterpretation of the outcomes and that the implementors are always at odds with policy enactors.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings, as well as their theoretical implications, may be combined into a theory about the feasibility and desirability of higher education reform - the intentional adaptation of local institutions by means of system planning and decision-making. The analysis of the Swedish

data concerning the organizational development of universities and colleges does not confirm the hypothesis that what is essential in higher education institutions is what is untouchable by government - their private lives (Trow, 1975). Essential aspects of the life of higher education institutions may be changed by public policy - it seems. Nor does the data support the conclusion that each and every policy coming from the system level must result in policy failure, because higher education systems comprise a bottom dominated structure (Clark, 1983). Though each individual and every department is basic to the operation of the higher education organization in a sense that is paralleled in no other type of organization, valid tasks for system decision-making and implementation still remain, especially in higher education systems characterized by a low degree of autonomy as the Swedish system. We may conclude that there are aspects of higher education where reform is possible and also desirable as a response to a changing environment. The analysis of the data also shows, however, that there are aspects of higher education life where reforms are neither feasible nor desirable. And, most important, the continuous process of public policy oriented towards organizational development exacts a price that may be very high: bureaucratization. It is an open question wether the process of bureaucratization will level off and whether its consequences may be ameliorated through deliberate action.

Jan-Erik Lane

1983-10-26

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